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Department of Energy
Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 550
Richland, Washington 99352

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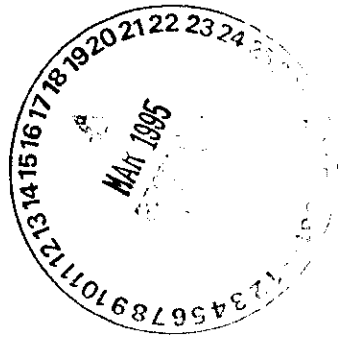

Ms. Donna Powaukee
Nez Perce Indian Tribe
P.O. Box 365
Lapwai, Idaho 83540-0365

Dear Ms. Powaukee:

REQUEST FOR IDENTIFICATION OF THE NEZ PERCE INDIAN TRIBE'S (NPT) HEALTH AND ECOLOGICAL SCENARIOS FOR INCLUSION INTO THE COLUMBIA RIVER COMPREHENSIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT (CRCIA)

The purpose of this letter is twofold: (1) to request that the NPT provide a separate listing, if appropriate, of the scenarios of concern for the CRCIA; and (2) to request a separate listing, if appropriate, of the ecological scenarios of concern to the NPT. To help define how this information will adapt to the CRCIA, the following background information is provided.

The CRCIA Project at the Pacific Northwest Laboratory (PNL) is supporting the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) in evaluating the current human and ecological risks from the Columbia River attributable to past and present activities on the Hanford Site. Human risk from exposure to radioactive and hazardous materials will be addressed for a range of river use options. Ecological risk to the river ecosystem will also be evaluated for radioactive and hazardous materials. If unacceptable levels of risk are found, remedial actions will be initiated consistent with the National Contingency Plan and the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order through the Hanford Past Practice Strategy.

Steps in the ecological risk analysis include: 1) identification of the contaminants of concern, 2) identification of a set of animal and plant species that will be analyzed, 3) performance of a preliminary risk analysis, and 4) performance of a final risk analysis. A document defining the draft list of contaminants of concern was published in early February 1995. This document identifies approximately 30 contaminants for which a more detailed impact assessment should be performed. This document was forwarded to interested parties including the NPT, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation for review and coordination.

There are hundreds of species of plants and animals in the Columbia River. It is not cost effective to analyze the real or potential impact on all species of every radioactive or hazardous material used at the Hanford Site. The proposed approach in the CRCIA is to define a limited set of species for which a detailed impact analysis will be performed. The approach has three steps: 1) identification of a comprehensive list of plant and animal species in the Columbia River, 2) definition of a set of criteria to identify species that should be studied in detail, and 3) application of the criteria to get the reduced species list.

PNL has performed a draft pass through the three steps in defining the species of concern list. In an effort to provide an earlier opportunity for coordination for the species of concern effort than what was available for the contaminants of concern effort, and to ensure that the tribes values are captured in the selection criteria, on January 26, 1995, DOE and PNL extended an invitation to meet with the NPT at a time and location of your choosing, to discuss the overall approach and preliminary results.

Although there are no resources identified to allow PNL to address the scenarios during FY 1995, both DOE and PNL would appreciate it if the NPT would provide this information by August 1, 1995. If the NPT's scenarios of interest are provided during the developmental process, then the CRCIA will have a basis for estimating the impacts from Hanford in a manner that incorporates these concerns.

If you desire to discuss this matter further or require additional information, please contact Mr. Randy Brich at (509) 376-9031.

Sincerely,

Julie K. Erickson, Director
River Sites Restoration Division

RSD:RFB

cc: R. Jim, YIN
H. Rueben, NPT
J. Wilkinson, CTUIR